

# UK bathing water quality in 2020



## United Kingdom

June 2021

Photo: © Marco Verch/Flickr



## Bathing water quality in the season of 2020

# The United Kingdom

Under the provisions of the [Bathing Water Directive](#), more than 22 000 bathing waters are monitored in Europe each season. The monitoring data and other information regarding bathing water management are reported to the European Environment Agency by 30 reporting countries in Europe, to be assessed for the annual European report and more detailed national reports.

### 1. BWD reporting in the season of 2020

Bathing waters in the season 2020		Bathing water quality in the season of 2020	
<b>Total reported</b>	640	<b>Excellent</b>	110 (17.2%)
Coastal	624	<b>Good</b>	32 (5%)
Inland	16	<b>Sufficient</b>	29 (4.5%)
<b>First identified in 2020</b>	0	<b>Poor</b>	12 (1.9%)
<b>Delisted in 2020</b>	4	<b>Not classified</b>	457 (71.4%)
<b>Total reported samples</b>	2269		

The bathing waters are quality classified according to the two microbiological parameters (Escherichia coli and intestinal enterococci) defined in the Bathing Water Directive. 26.7% of all reported bathing waters are in line with the minimum quality standards of the Directive, thus classified “sufficient” or better. Such low share of quality-classified bathing waters is due to monitoring restrictions related to the pandemic measures.

More information at the **national bathing water portal**:

England: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/explorer/index.html>

Gibraltar: <http://environmental-agency.gi/index.php/bathing-water/>

Northern Ireland: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/bathing-water-quality>

Scotland: <http://apps.sepa.org.uk/bathingwaters/>

Wales: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/wales/bathing-waters/profiles>

## 2. BWD monitoring

Each bathing water that is identified by the reporting country needs to have a monitoring calendar established before the bathing season. The monitoring calendar requirements can be summarised as follows: (1) a pre-season sample is to be taken shortly before the start of each bathing season; (2) no fewer than four (alternatively, three for specific cases) samples are to be taken and analysed per bathing season; and (3) an interval between sampling dates never exceeds one month.

From the reported data, the assessment also designates effective implementation of the monitoring calendar (Table 1).

**Table 1: Bathing waters in 2020 according to implementation of the monitoring calendar**

	Count	Share of total [%]
<b>Monitoring calendar implemented</b> A bathing water satisfies monitoring calendar conditions listed above.	111	17.30%
<b>Monitoring calendar not implemented</b> A bathing water does not satisfy monitoring calendar conditions listed above. It may be quality-classified if enough samples are available in the last assessment period.	529	82.70%

In addition to the monitoring calendar, management specifics of the last assessment period of four years are also assessed. The status primarily indicates whether the complete dataset of four seasons is available, but also points out the reasons as to why the bathing waters do not have the complete last assessment period dataset. The latter may indicate developing conditions at the site – most importantly, whether the bathing water has been newly identified within the period, or any changes have occurred that are likely to affect the classification of the bathing water.

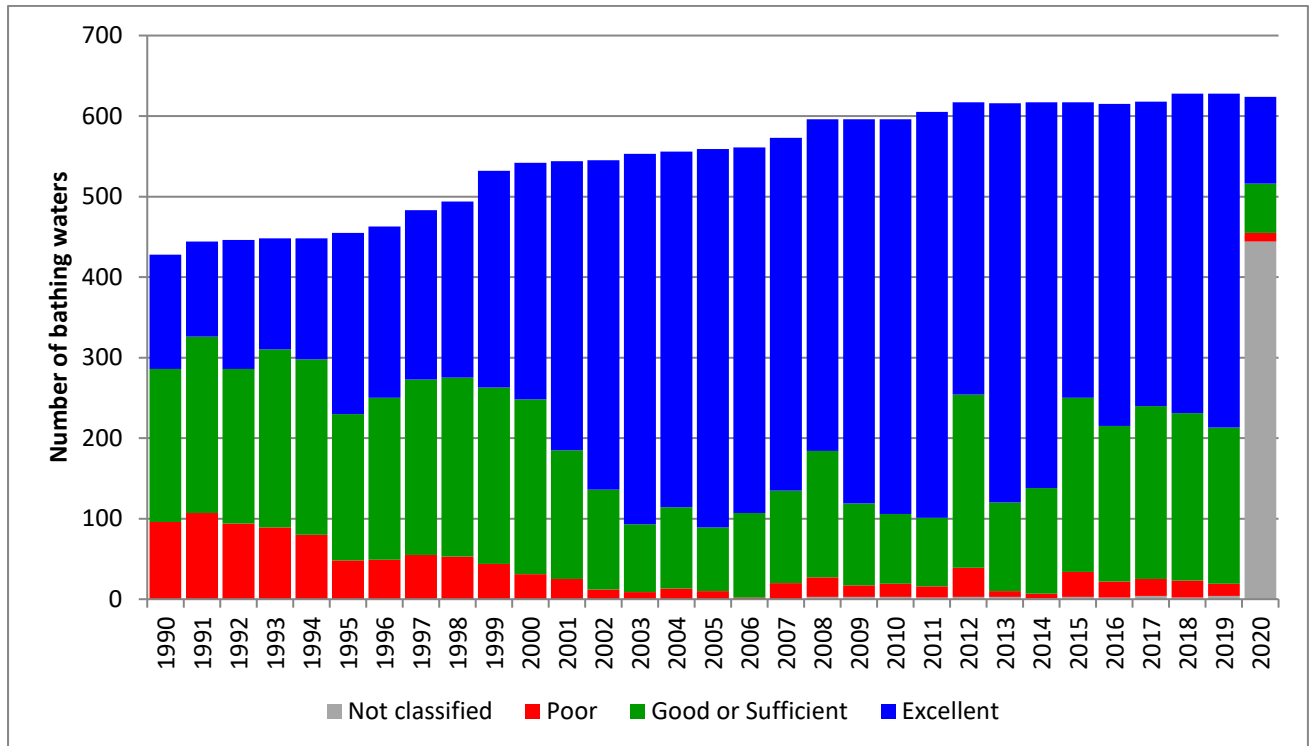
**Table 2: Management specifics in the last assessment period of 2017–2020**

	Count	Share of total [%]
<b>Continuously monitored</b> A bathing water has been monitored in each bathing season in the last assessment period.	515	80.50%
<b>Newly identified</b> A bathing water was identified for the first time within the last assessment period. Such status is assigned for full four years after reported.	5	0.80%
<b>Quality changes</b> A bathing water was subject to changes described in BWD Art. 4.4 within the last assessment period. Such status is assigned for full four years after reported.	2	0.30%
<b>Monitoring gap</b> A bathing water was not monitored for at least one season in the last assessment period. No quality classification is made if not enough samples are reported for the most recent season.	118	18.40%

### 3. Bathing water quality

#### 3.1 Coastal bathing waters

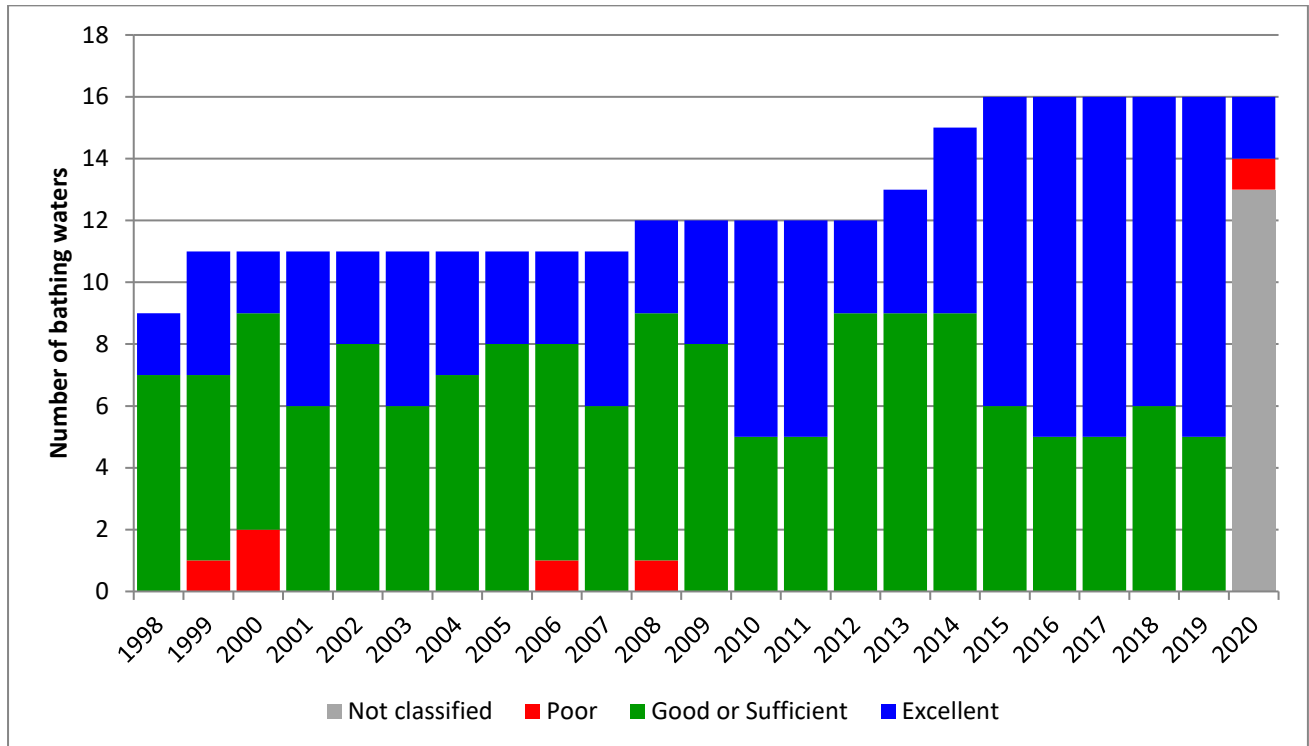
Coastal bathing waters are situated on the sea or transitional water coastline, with respective parameter thresholds defined in Annex I of the Directive. They are subject to more strict thresholds than the inland bathing waters. Quality trend for the period 1990–2020 if historical data are available is shown in Figure 1. Number of bathing waters by quality class for the last assessment period 2017–2020 is given in Annex I.



**Figure 1: Trend of coastal bathing water quality.** Notes: Each column represents an absolute number of bathing waters in the season. Quality classes “good” and “sufficient” are merged for comparability with the classification of the preceding Bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC.

### 3.2 Inland bathing waters

Inland bathing waters are situated at rivers and lakes, featuring fresh water and with respective parameter thresholds defined in Annex I of the Directive. Quality trend for the period 1990–2020 if historical data are available is shown in Figure 2. Number of bathing waters by quality class for the last assessment period 2017–2020 is given in Annex I.



**Figure 2: Trend of inland bathing water quality.** Notes: Each column represents an absolute number of bathing waters in the season. Quality classes “good” and “sufficient” are merged for comparability with the classification of the preceding Bathing Water Directive 76/160/EEC.

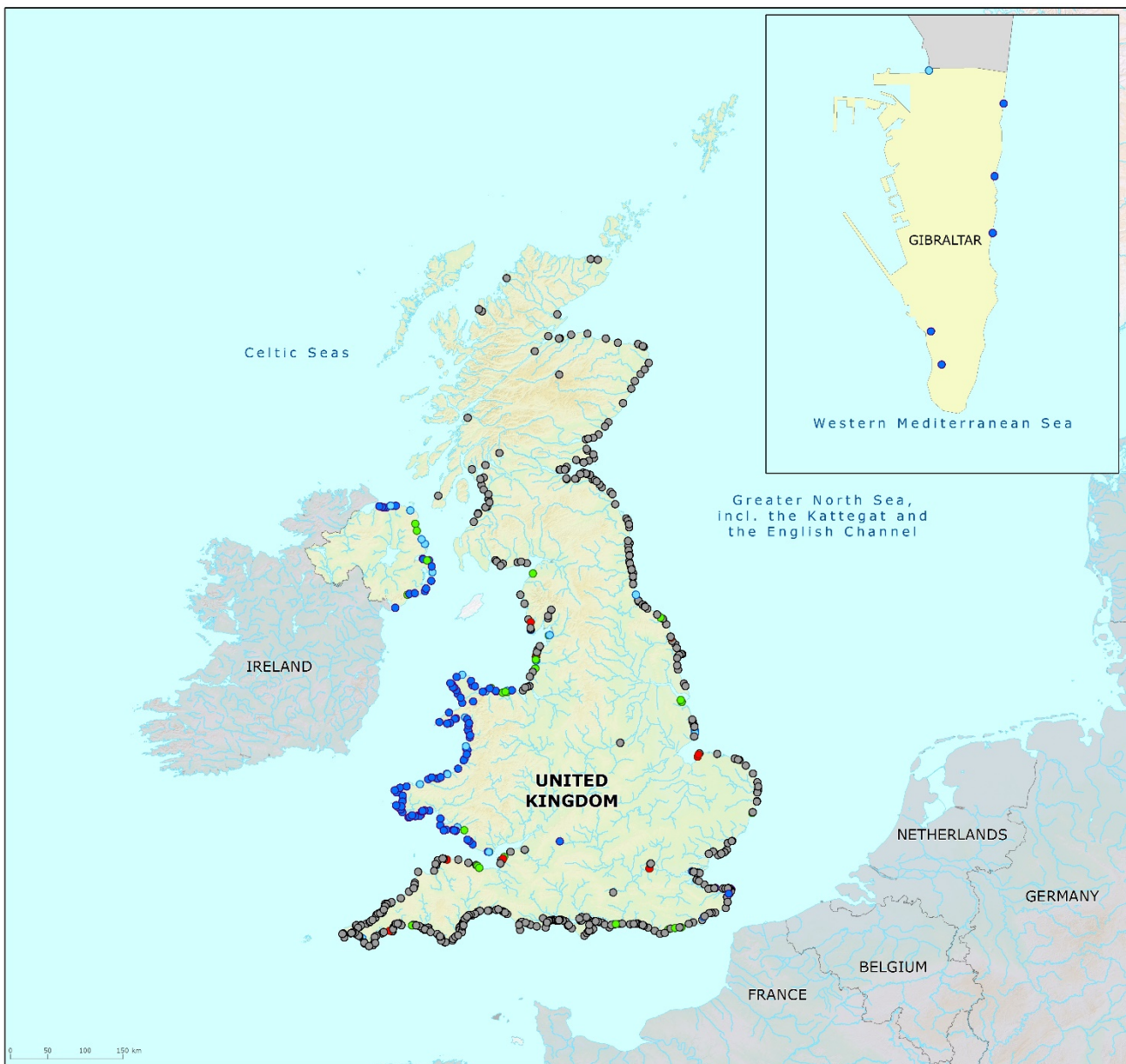
## Annex I Bathing water quality in 2017–2020

Table 3: Bathing water quality by water category and season

		Total number of bathing waters	Excellent		Good		Sufficient		Poor		Not classified	
			Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Coastal	2017	618	378	61.2%	164	26.5%	51	8.3%	21	3.4%	4	0.6%
	2018	628	397	63.2%	165	26.3%	43	6.8%	21	3.3%	2	0.3%
	2019	628	415	66.1%	143	22.8%	51	8.1%	15	2.4%	4	0.6%
	2020	624	108	17.3%	32	5.1%	29	4.6%	11	1.8%	444	71.2%
Inland	2017	16	11	68.8%	3	18.8%	2	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	2018	16	10	62.5%	4	25.0%	2	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	2019	16	11	68.8%	3	18.8%	2	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	2020	16	2	12.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	6.3%	13	81.3%
Total	2017	634	389	61.4%	167	26.3%	53	8.4%	21	3.3%	4	0.6%
	2018	644	407	63.2%	169	26.2%	45	7.0%	21	3.3%	2	0.3%
	2019	644	426	66.1%	146	22.7%	53	8.2%	15	2.3%	4	0.6%
	2020	640	110	17.2%	32	5.0%	29	4.5%	12	1.9%	457	71.4%

## Annex II Bathing water quality map

**Map 1: Bathing waters reported during the 2020 bathing season in the United Kingdom**



**Bathing water**

- Excellent water quality
- Good water quality
- Sufficient water quality
- Poor water quality
- Quality classification not possible
- No data
- Outside data coverage (data available, not presented on the map)

**Source:** National boundaries: EEA; Large rivers and lakes: EEA, WFD Article 3; Bathing waters data and coordinates: U.K. authorities; Digital Elevation Model over Europe (EU-DEM): EEA.